

# 108 State officials: Dream big

## State serves as partner with new program

**S**tate officials are asking Iowans to dream big. Again.

The last time Iowans were given a chance to make their dreams come true was when Gov. Tom Vilsack announced plans for Vision Iowa, a program that funded facilities that improved the quality of life in the state. It was a rousing success, with new parks, museums, recreation centers and other amenities popping up all over the state.

The new experiment is called Great Places and will serve not only as an exercise in thinking big, but also in improving government service. It's a slap-your-forehead kind of idea involving the creation of a one-stop shop that community leaders can go to for assistance on various development projects.

This is how the Great Places Web site describes the new program: "The initiative turns the state into a new kind of partner with Iowans — demystifying government, combining resources for impact and delivering results."

Nearly 250 communities, organizations and individuals have asked for assistance in developing proposals for their own "great places." From here, a citizen review board will review the proposals and pick projects to pursue.

You can read the proposals at [www.culturalaffairs.org/greatplaces/](http://www.culturalaffairs.org/greatplaces/). They range from the boldly innovative to the sublimely wacky. The program offers communities the tools necessary to do a self-analysis of the things that make them great. That's a process we think every government entity should go through every five years or so. That self-audit is a great way to set a

course for building a better, er, a greater place.

Four N'West Iowa entities have asked for assistance in developing Great Places.

The O'Brien County Economic Development Corporation office wants to create a plan to improve handicap accessibility throughout the county.

The Sioux Center's Historical Village wants help in creating a long-term plan.

The city of Sioux Center wants help in studying the feasibility of adding two lanes to Highway 75, which runs through town, as well as assistance in developing guidelines to procure private property, restore or renovate downtown storefronts, improve customer service and create a single visual identity for the city.

Perhaps the boldest ideas are forming in Sanborn, where community leaders want assistance in crafting a plan to help bring the city closer to its railroad roots. The community wants to study restoring the old Milwaukee Lake, which the railroad built in the 1800s and drained in 1955. It also wants to restore several railroad buildings around town and find ways to better utilize space along main street. It's an exciting proposal and the kind of on-the-edge vision that we'd like to see more communities exhibit.

In fact, it's difficult to understand why more communities in the area aren't taking advantage of the Great Places program. People sometimes get nervous when they hear state officials say: "We're the government. We're here to help." But this time they mean it. We should take advantage of their services and all work to continue making the region a better place.

N'West Iowa  
Review  
Sheldon, IA  
Circ. 4548  
From Page:  
8  
7/30/2005  
45225

